

the GPO Bookstore appears right below the link to the Google eBook purchase link. "Find in a Library" appears below the sellers and links to WorldCat (collections and services of libraries worldwide). As we all know, this will be problematic since holdings in WorldCat for government documents are spotty at best.

The Google eBookstore is an interesting venture and we should be pleased that government publications are represented. Government information and publications should be available in the same places as other sorts of information and publications — the web, Google, Google eBookstore, in your local bookstore, in the library, in the classroom, etc. This partnership is yet another step toward making that a reality. It's not perfect. The eBookstore should have information about the availability of government publications from the government (GPO), free online versions, and from depository libraries.

There are many questions. Will searchers see the few issues of the *Congressional Globe* available in the Google eBookstore and think that's all there is? Will they give up, believing that if it's not in Google or the Google eBookstore then the title must not be available? Can GPO forge a strong relationship with Google and influence how it displays government documents? Or, will searchers make serendipitous discoveries in the Google eBookstore that propel them to ask more questions and find more information? Will more discoverable government documents in Google Books and eBookstore spur serious scholars and researchers to seek even more in their depository libraries? Will government information librarians, public librarians, school librarians, and others use this as an opportunity to better publicize their rich print and online collections of government information? Let's hope that GPO, government agencies, and government information librarians can work with Google (and others) to forge more, and better, partnerships in the future. Stay tuned!

Barbie Selby
Research & Information Services
Ilderman Library, University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4154, USA
E-mail address: bselby@virginia.edu

doi:[10.1016/j.giq.2011.09.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2011.09.003)

Patent Reform in the 112th Congress: Innovation Issues. Wendy H. Schacht and John R. Thomas. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, June 30, 2011. 38 pp. R41638

Housed within the Library of Congress, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) provides legal and policy analysis for members of the House and Senate. CRS is well-regarded for its authoritative, thorough, and nonpartisan reports. This report ably upholds that tradition as an excellent primer on recent patent reform efforts in the United States. It is essential reading for any researcher interested in the U.S. patent system.

The Constitution specifically authorizes Congress to grant patents to inventors. The scope of inventions for which patents are granted has dramatically expanded since the adoption of the Constitution, including business methods, software, and genetic inventions. Citing a number of concerns, some believe that the patent system is in need of reform. Relatively recent types of patentable materials are controversial because they encompass inventions that are merely mental processes or products of nature. Innovation is stifled by companies, derisively called patent trolls, which purchase patents solely for the purpose of suing other companies for patent infringement. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) has failed to keep up with the growing number of patent

applications, and increased funding is needed to deal with the backlog. Over the past few Congresses patent reform legislation has been introduced. On September 16, 2011, President Obama signed into law a major reform of the patent system, the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act (Public Law 112-29).

The report, authored by CRS science and technology policy specialist Wendy H. Schacht and Georgetown law professor and visiting scholar John R. Thomas, gives a quick review of patent requirements and thoroughly enumerates the changes proposed by the Senate (S. 23) and House (H.R. 1249) patent reform bills. H.R. 1249 was the bill that was ultimately enacted, but both the Senate and House influenced the final legislation. Before the reform law was enacted, U.S. patent law assigned priority for discoveries to the first inventor—that is, an inventor's patent claim could be displaced if another inventor later showed that he had developed the invention first. Determinations of patent priority were made in complex administrative proceedings called interference proceedings. Supporters of this shift from the current first-to-invent to a first-inventor-to-file system argue that it would encourage inventors to file their patent claims as quickly as possible and would reduce the need for interference proceedings to determine who invented the claimed invention first. The first-inventor-to-file system is widely adopted in other nations, so the reform law brings the U.S. system in line with most countries' patent systems. Opponents of the first-inventor-to-file system are concerned that large corporations are better equipped to file first, thereby unfairly reducing the chances small businesses and individuals can get patents. The law also makes a number of changes to the USPTO's procedures for reexamining granted patents and grants it more financial freedom by increasing the availability of revenue from application fees.

The proposed amendments in both patent reform bills are fully explained in prose that is much less dry than one would expect from such an exposition. Researchers wishing to understand the intricacies of the current patent laws and proposed changes will find this report to be a more accessible explanation than most congressional committee reports. The last section of the report briefly discusses the main issues in patent reform, such as patent quality, litigation costs, international harmonization, and patent speculation. The report is densely footnoted — 200 footnotes in 38 pages — with citations to relevant sources for further research. As of this writing, the report has been issued three times with updates as patent reform legislation has progressed through Congress. It has not yet been updated to reflect the enactment of H.R. 1249, but a later version may very well be issued in the future.

This report will be valuable for any researcher interested in patent law. The CRS has issued a number of other reports relating to patent reform, including *Patent Reform in the 111th Congress: Innovation Issues* (R40481, January 20, 2011), *Patent Reform: Issues in the Biomedical and Software Industries*, (RL33367, January 12, 2011), and *Patent Reform: Judicial Developments in Areas of Legislative Interest* (R41090, March 2, 2010).

Unfortunately, no central and free source exists for CRS reports. A number of commercial databases (such as BNA and ProQuest Congressional) include CRS reports, and other vendors will procure reports for a fee. However, a number of reports are freely available online. Before purchasing this report one should at least check OpenCRS (opencrs.com) and the Federation of American Scientists (fas.org) for a free copy.

Benjamin J. Keele
William & Mary Law School,
PO Box 8795, Williamsburg, VA 23187, USA
E-mail address: bjkeele@wm.edu

doi:[10.1016/j.giq.2011.07.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2011.07.001)